

President will have a change of heart at some point on the most important issue of our time.

None of this means we can't try to do something about any of the other big issues we face, and that includes immigration. There may be some who think our current immigration system is working, but I haven't met them. I haven't met anybody who thinks the current immigration system is working. And as an elected leader in my party, it is my view that at least we need to try to improve the situation that, as far as I can tell, very few people believe is working well either for our own citizens or for those around the world who aspire to become Americans.

Everyone knows the current system is broken. Our borders are not secure. Those who come legally often stay illegally, and we don't know who or where they are. Our immigration laws last changed almost three decades ago, and they failed to take into account the needs of our rapidly changing economy. So what we are doing today is initiating a debate.

We are all grateful for the hard work of the so-called Gang of 8, but today's vote isn't a final judgment on their product as much as it is a recognition of the problem—a national problem—one that needs debate.

The Gang of 8 has done its work. Now it is time for the Gang of 100 to do its work—for the entire Senate to have its say on the issue and see if we can improve the status quo.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the bill has serious flaws. I will vote to debate it and for the opportunity to amend it, but in the days ahead there will need to be major changes to this bill if it is going to become law. These include, but are not limited to, the areas of border security, government benefits, and taxes.

I am going to need more than an assurance from Secretary Napolitano, for instance, that the border is secure to feel comfortable about the situation down on the border. Too often, recently, we have been reminded that as government grows, it becomes less responsible to the American people and fails to perform basic functions either through incompetence—incompetence—or willful disregard of the wishes of Congress. Our continued failure to secure major portions of the border not only makes true immigration reform far more difficult, it presents an urgent threat to our national security.

Some have criticized this bill for its cost to taxpayers, and that is a fair critique. Those who are here illegally shouldn't have their unlawful status rewarded—rewarded—with benefits and tax credits. So the bill has some serious flaws, and we need to be serious about trying to fix them. The goal should be to make the status quo better, not worse, and that is what the next few weeks are about. They are about giving the entire Senate, indeed the entire country, an opportunity to

weigh in on this important debate to make their voices heard and to try to improve our immigration policy. What that means, of course, obviously, is an open amendment process.

Let me be clear. Doing nothing about the problem we all acknowledge isn't a solution. Doing nothing about the problem is not a solution, it is an avoidance strategy. The longer we wait to have this debate, as difficult as it is, the harder it will be to solve the problem.

We tried to do something 6 years ago and didn't succeed. We may not succeed this time either, but attempting to solve tough problems in a serious and deliberate manner is precisely what the Senate at its best should be doing, and that is what we are going to try to do in this debate.

#### UPHOLDING COMMITMENTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has now been 138 days since the Senate reached an agreement on the issue of whether we would violate the rules to change the rules—138 days since we reached an agreement. In that agreement, the Senate adopted two rules changes and two standing orders, and the majority leader made an unequivocal commitment, not contingent on his judgment of what was good behavior, but the matter was settled for this Congress. In fact, 2 years before that, he said it was settled for the next two Congresses.

So let's take a look at exactly what the majority leader's pledge was. This was back in 2011 when the majority leader said:

I agree that the proper way to change Senate rules is through the procedures established in those rules—

In those rules—  
and I will oppose any effort in this Congress or the next—

The Congress we are in now—  
to change the Senate's rules other than through the regular order.

So the commitment on January 27, 2011, was not just for that Congress but for the next one as well.

Then 2 years later, on January 24 of this year, I said in a colloquy with the majority leader:

I would confirm with the majority leader that the Senate would not consider other resolutions—

We had passed a couple of resolutions, a couple of rules changes, and a couple of standing orders—

relating to any standing order or rules this Congress—

That is the Congress we are in right now—

unless they went through the regular order process?

The majority leader said:

That is correct. Any other resolutions related to Senate procedure would be subject to a regular order process, including consideration by the Rules Committee.

Now, the regular order for changing rules is that the Parliamentarian

would rule that it would take 67 votes to do that. But after these commitments were made both in January of 2011 and in January of this year, the majority leader has consistently repeated: In spite of what I said in January of each of the last 2 years, if Members are not on their best behavior, presumably, I will do this anyway.

So I mentioned to the majority leader publicly—privately for a long time and then publicly over the last few weeks—that I intend to ask him the question every day: Does he intend to keep his word?

That is critical around here. It is important for all Senators to keep their word, but it is particularly important for the majority leader, who has the opportunity to be, shall I say, more important than the rest of us because he gets to set the agenda and he gets to determine what the Senate will debate. He has the right of first recognition and, as he repeatedly reminds me in these colloquies, he will always have the last word. So I think the currency of the realm in the Senate is one's word.

So those are my observations today and will be my observations tomorrow until we get this established because I think the atmosphere in which the Senate operates, with this threat of a nuclear option holding over it, is not conducive to the kind of collegial environment we need in processing nominations and in processing legislation. We expect the majority leader to keep his word.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

#### IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is important that everyone keeps their word.

I am pleased the Republican leader acknowledged that the immigration system is broken and needs fixing, and we will have a full and open debate on this over the next 3 weeks. That is very good. I am very glad to hear the Republican leader will vote to help us move forward on this legislation.

For 15 years, James Courtney fought for this country as a Member of the U.S. Army. He did that for a decade and a half.

For most of those 15 years, James' wife Sharon was at home in Las Vegas fighting being deported. She has lived in America since she was a young teenager. She speaks fluent English. She has three sons with her husband James, and he has been her husband for 13 years.

She has supported James through three tours of duty in Iraq where he was wounded significantly, suffered brain injury, and because of his wounds had to retire medically from the military. But because she is in the United States without the proper paperwork, she has lived with the fear that she, on any given day, would be deported back to Mexico and her family would be torn apart.

Servicemembers and veterans of the U.S. military—and their family members who support them—deserve a better life than worry and fear.

In March, just a few weeks ago, James and Sharon came to Washington. They came with hundreds of other immigrants who are concerned about being deported. They are concerned about immigration reform. They know the system is broken and needs to be fixed. This is what James said:

I did what my country asked me to do. Now I'm asking my country to keep us together for the sake of humanity and freedom.

James spoke about keeping his three American children together with the mother of those three children, his wife.

When I heard James and Sharon's story, I was recommitted to doing something to help them. And I did. Not only is Sharon a wonderful mother and wife, she is also caretaker to her disabled husband. Her family needs her.

Last month, James and Sharon learned that immigration officials have deferred her status, her deportation. She is no longer in immediate danger of being separated from her family.

See, Mr. President, she was a DREAMer, and that is who President Obama stepped forward to help. In effect, what this did is it allowed her to stay and care for her husband and three children. Her children are 16, 11, and 8 years of age.

While I was happy to help James and Sharon, it is unfortunate that they needed any help in the first place. When our servicemembers are fighting overseas, they should be focused on the difficult and dangerous job they face—not worried about their family members back home.

Think about that. If she had been deported while he was overseas, what would the three boys do? Dad is overseas. They are Americans. They were born here.

No veteran of the U.S. military should have to fight to keep his wife, the caretaker of his children, by his side. Her story is compelling. Their story is compelling. But there are millions of stories just like it—stories of mothers and fathers terrified of being torn away from their U.S. citizen children; stories of young men and women fearful of being deported from the only country they know, they have ever called home; stories of families forced to live in the shadows despite coming to America in search of a brighter future.

There are 11 million reasons to pass commonsense immigration reform that mends our broken system—11 million stories of fear of being deported, fear of heartbreak, fear of suffering, and actual suffering they have facing them every day worrying about if they can go to the store, do they have to stay home. They certainly cannot travel. But for this fine young woman, that has been taken away because of President Obama.

These stories should motivate Congress to act. The bipartisan proposal before this body takes important steps to strengthen border security. It is remarkable what we already have there. We have drones, 700 miles of fencing. We have sensors. We have fixed-wing aircraft flying around with helicopters. We have 21,000 Border Patrol agents. But if there are ways people believe we could do better on security that is important, that is not just some reason to try to kill this legislation, let's take a look at it.

I spoke this morning with the chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Senator CARPER. He has some ideas. He is preparing amendments. I like Senator CARPER always. He is very thoughtful, and I am sure he will do something that he believes would improve the situation on the border. He has gone, as a member of that committee and chairman of that committee, all over the southern part of this country looking at what is happening on the border.

So the bipartisan proposal before the Senate takes important steps to strengthen border security. It also makes crucial improvements to our broken immigration system so families like James and Sharon's are never subject to this kind of anguish again.

While this legislation is not an instant fix for families, it does provide a pathway to earned citizenship. It does not put them at the front of the line. It puts them at the back of the line. They have to stay out of trouble. They have to work, pay taxes, and focus on learning English. That is what it is about.

Passing meaningful immigration reform will be good for our national security, it will be good for the economy, it will be good for James and Sharon Courtney and millions of families just like them.

James is a veteran who sacrificed his time and his health to keep this Nation safe from harm. He is now disabled. We can at least thank him by keeping his family safe—and together.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### BORDER SECURITY, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, AND IMMIGRATION MODERNIZATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 744, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows: Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 80, S. 744, a bill to provide for comprehensive immigration reform and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would ask the Chair at this time to recognize the

Senator from Hawaii, Mr. SCHATZ, who replaced Senator Inouye. I understand he is going to give his maiden speech in the Senate today. I would ask that the Chair recognize him.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

#### NATIVE HAWAIIAN GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, today, June 11, marks a public holiday in the State of Hawaii, King Kamehameha Day, celebrated since 1872. We hold a statewide festival and mark the day with lei draping ceremonies, parades, hula competitions, and other festivities. It is a day to honor Kamehameha the Great, who unified the Kingdom of Hawaii, and to celebrate the rich culture and traditions of the Hawaiian people.

I chose this day to come to the Senate floor to talk about an issue of great importance to me and to the great State of Hawaii: Native Hawaiian government reorganization. It was a top priority of my immediate predecessors in this body, Senators Inouye and Akaka. For more than three decades, they worked together in the Congress to advance priorities important to Hawaii and to the Nation.

They made history at almost every step of their careers—securing dozens of firsts in the House and in the Senate. But for the indigenous people of the United States, Senators Inouye and Akaka will be forever remembered for their work as members and then chairs of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and for their advocacy on behalf of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

I want to acknowledge their legacy and to thank Senator Akaka for the role he continues to play in our great State and in the Native Hawaiian community in particular. Here is the reason I have chosen to carry forward this fight on behalf of Native Hawaiians: Simply stated, it is right to seek justice.

Native Hawaiians are the only federally recognized native people without a government-to-government relationship with the United States, and they deserve access to the prevailing Federal policy of self-determination. Opponents have argued that Native Hawaiians are not "Indians," as if the word applies to native people of a certain racial or ethnic heritage or is limited to indigenous people from one part of the United States but not another. This is misguided.

Our Constitution makes it clear. Our Founding Fathers understood that it was the tribal nations' sovereign authority that distinguished them from others. It was the fact that tribes were native groups with distinct governments that predated our own that justified special treatment in the Constitution and under Federal law.

In what is now the United States, European contact with native groups began in the 15th and 16th centuries on the east coast, and the 16th and 17th